

Meeting of the Streets, Alleys and Traffic Committee of the City of La Salle
July 30, 2018
Immediately Following the Finance Committee Meeting - City Hall Council Chambers

Chairman Bacidore called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present- Alderman Bacidore, Alderman Ptak, Alderman Herndon, Alderman Duncan, Alderman Reynolds

Absent- None

Others Present: Mayor Grove, Alderman Demes, Alderman Schneider, Alderman Lavieri, City Engineer Brian Brown, Andy Bacidore, Rob Uranich, John Duncan, Residents of North Marquette Street.

A quorum was present.

Chairman Bacidore read the requests as brought forth by the residents on North Marquette Street. The requests were as follows:

1. Discussion and potential action regarding request from neighbors residing on North Marquette Street to designate the alley running north and south between St. Vincent Avenue and Marquette Street as a private drive to be used by residents only from 11th Street to "Oak Road" and related matters.
2. Discussion and potential action regarding request from neighbors residing on North Marquette Street to close "Oak Road" to vehicular traffic from St. Vincent Avenue to Marquette Street and related matters.

Chairman Bacidore informed the petitioners that the committee would be unable to comment on the second request as the City is currently involved in pending litigation concerning a portion of "Oak Road." However, Attorney McPhedran stated that those present have a right to have their concerns heard and the aldermen could comment on the portions of Oak Road that are unaffected by the litigation. Attorney McPhedran stated that the petitioners are not parties to the litigation and that is another reason why they have the right to comment on the matter. Chairman Bacidore then opened the floor to anyone who wished to comment.

Carol Baness of 1130 Marquette Street stated that the neighbors who live on Marquette Street and abut the north south alley as referenced in item #1, utilize this alley as their only access to their garages. She said there are one or two homes that have access to their garages off of 11th Street. In total she counted twelve garages that have access through the alley only. In the plat map of 1906 it shows this area as an alley. By definition, she described an alley as a public way within a block generally giving access to the rear lots or buildings and not to be used for general traffic. She continued by saying that the residents have asked several times for something to be done with this alley and now that the school is moving its main entrance to Lindberg, parents will speed through this alley to get their children to school on time. The change will create a more dense traffic pattern and will make it very difficult for residents to access their garages. She stated that if this is an alley then it is not meant for public use. She stated that she would like the protection that the alley affords the residents.

Ms. Grant of 1156 Marquette stated that she resides in her parent's house which is located at the west end of Oak Road and Marquette Street. She stated that her only access to her home is the alley referred to as "Oak Road" and it is a challenge exiting her drive. She stated that she has been hit while pulling

out of her driveway into the alley by a teacher coming out of the school parking lot. She stated that a police report was filed to document this incident. She stated that she believes the people who live there deserve to be protected. She added that many people use this alley instead of using St. Vincent to avoid the stoplight. To close the alley and allow it to be private would eliminate these problems. She continued by saying that it is dangerous and to open it up to the public as a thru-way would be devastating to those in the neighborhood.

Laura Gruenwald of 1135 Marquette stated that her biggest concern with that portion of the alley opening back up are the people who see the stop light turn yellow and then dodge through the alley. When the Mayor asked for clarification, she stated that she is referring to those traveling south on St. Vincent. If they see the light turn yellow, they will utilize the "Oak Road" alley near the school. Alderman Duncan stated that if the residents want the north south alley closed off, then cars will have to travel to Marquette which will create more traffic in the area where her children actually are. She stated that if the "Oak Road" portion opens back up, she would at least want signage or speed bumps. She does not have a garage on the north south alley, but has concerns about both.

Jessica Dergance resident of 641 11th Street stated that her only access to her driveway is through the alley. Many times when she tries to pull into her driveway, when a car is coming from either direction cars will pull into her yard to allow another car to pass through. Mayor Grove asked her what she thought about the City making the alley one way. She stated that she has asked for that before but was denied. Her suggestion is that it should be one way south. She feels that should cut down on traffic for people cutting the light. Her main issue is people driving into her yard to let other cars pass.

Alderman Duncan continued the discussion by asking the residents what they thought about possibly making the alley one way north to south. Mrs. Baness stated that would be great. Alderman Ptak asked if speed bumps would help. The general consensus was that it would not help.

Discussion then followed regarding the portions of "Oak Road" that are not related to the current litigation. Mrs. Baness stated that it is very nice currently with "Oak Road" being closed. (Oak Road is known as Lincoln Court in the area running east/west between St. Vincent and Marquette) Mrs. Grant stated that she would like to see "Oak Road" remained closed from St. Vincent through to Marquette Street. Alderman Duncan then questioned how permanent closure of that portion of "Oak Road" would affect access to the school or residents in emergency situations. Chief Bacidore said he would be happy to go out and look at the situation, but in many instances the alleys are used to access garages in the back. He continued by saying that ultimately it is up to the council, but residents have to be prepared that in certain emergency situations they can only do so much if alleys are closed.

Alderman Duncan then asked if a stop sign at the west end of "Oak Road" before Marquette would be helpful in slowing traffic down. Ms. Grant was not in favor, although others thought it may be helpful.

Mr. Jerome Baness stated that we are dealing with two issues. One is the alley north and south and being able to safely back out of driveways. The other issue is the cars traveling through the alley and Marquette Street at higher speeds and the safety of the children in the area. He suggested that "Children at Play" signs could be helpful.

Alderman Duncan suggested that the alley be designated as one way going south starting at "Oak Road" near the Grant property, but then two way on the north half of the alley toward Lindberg. Discussion followed with Alderman Duncan stating that this would reduce traffic in the portion of the block where

the residents have garages, but would allow parents access to drop off their children by entering off Marquette, dropping off students and then exiting onto Lindberg with the ability to turn east or west.

Mrs. Baness stated that the residents have met with Superintendent DeBernardi to discuss their concerns on several occasions. She stated that it is her understanding that the main exit for the school will now be on Lindberg with a secondary exit on St. Vincent. Because of this, she does not understand why the alley needs to remain open at all. Alderman Duncan stated that there is a parking lot off the alley that would require access.

Superintendent Brian DeBernardi stated that primary goal of the school board is to move the student concentration off of St. Vincent Avenue, as it is a roadway with a great deal of traffic. He continued by saying they are taking steps toward that goal, however the parking lot requires access as it is the only area where staff can park and provides parking during school activities, games, and events. He recognized what the petitioners are saying in regard to cars turning off 11th street and cutting through the alley, but re-emphasized that the main goal of the school is to get students off of St. Vincent.

Alderman Duncan asked if he would have a problem if the alley were one way southbound. Mr. DeBernardi stated that he is concerned this will increase traffic to the south onto 11th or to the west through "Oak Road" exiting onto Marquette. He felt having a portion of the alley two way would be confusing, so if it were to be one way he thought it was better to have it one way north to south.

Attorney McPhedran asked what the school's preference is. He stated that the school's preference is to alleviate traffic off St. Vincent. Alderman Duncan recapped by saying that it appears the school does not care what is done with the alley as long as they have access to the parking lot. Mr. DeBernardi stated that the school board has focused on the goal of alleviating traffic on St. Vincent and has not discussed these other issues. Mayor Grove asked Mr. DeBernardi what his recommendation would be to the school board regarding the north south alley. Superintendent DeBernardi responded by saying that by designating the alley as north/south, southbound traffic will increase as a result.

Mrs. Baness said her choice would be to have the alley blocked from "Oak Road" south. Mayor Grove stated that we did that in this alley, everyone in the City would ask for the same thing and that is not feasible. Mrs. Baness stated that not everyone has the same situation as they do.

Alderman Duncan recommended making the alley one way north to south for the entire alley with a stop sign on "Oak Road" as it exits onto Marquette. Mrs. Grant was not in favor of this. She felt this would make it worse. Alderman Duncan stated that it would slow traffic down which is what he understood one of the problems to be. Carol Baness again expressed concern for the safety of the children who are using the alley and "Oak Road" to get to school. She wants to find a way to reduce traffic.

Alderman Ptak again brought up speed bumps. He stated that they definitely slow people down so he did not understand why the residents were opposed to it. Mrs. Baness said she did not think everyone was opposed, but it depends where the speed bumps are placed. Aldermen Ptak stated that in his opinion designating the alley as one way north to south with speed bumps would be a place to start. It was agreed that making this a private drive is not an option.

Attorney McPhedran asked Superintendent DeBernardi if he had anything further to say on behalf of the school. Mr. DeBernardi responded by saying that his only concern with installing speed bumps is the possible effect they may have on storm water run-off issues that he has been trying to resolve.

Discussion continued regarding various solutions. Alderman Duncan asked those in attendance if they were in favor of a stop sign at Oak and Marquette. Ms. Grant was opposed, but the majority of those present were in favor. The residents in attendance were also in favor of designating the alley as one way south with speed bumps being installed.

Alderman Bacidore stated that the recommendation of the Streets, Alleys and Traffic committee to the City Council will be to designate the alley running north south between Lindberg and 11th Street as one way south, placing speed bumps in the alley and installing a stop sign at the intersection of Oak Road between the alley and Marquette Street.

Alderman Duncan asked Superintendent DeBernardi what the school's position is regarding the east side of "Oak Road". The litigation the City is currently involved in is with Mr. Miller's property on Lincoln Court. The request from those present was to keep "Oak Road" closed from St. Vincent to Marquette Street which Attorney McPhedran said includes Mr. Miller's portion of "Oak Road" located between St. Vincent Avenue and the alley which is also known as Lincoln Court.

Mr. DeBernardi stated that if the alley is designated north to south, drivers will need a second way out. He expressed concern that if they can only exit south, it could bottleneck. Alderman Duncan then inquired as to his opinion if the City were to stop litigation and let it remain closed. He said he would hold on an opinion until he sees what the north south alley operates on. He did not want to commit to saying the school would be ok with it remaining closed because he does not know what will happen with traffic if the north south alley becomes one way. Alderman Lavieri commented that with the decrease in use of St. Vincent Avenue, traffic will increase on Lindberg and other surrounding streets regardless. Alderman Duncan stated that if the council moves forward with these changes, they will not become effective until ordinances are passed at the August 13, 2018 meeting.

Alderman Schneider said that since he is not on the Streets, Alleys and Traffic Committee he has held his comments. However, Alderman Schneider stated that Mr. DeBernardi and the board has put a lot of time and effort into the plans for the renovations. When this issue first came up, Mr. Miller was asked to sit down with the City and the school to address some of these issues back then, but he chose to play hardball and did not want to do that, so we are where we are. Alderman Schneider continued by saying that thinks we are moving in the right direction to help the citizens, but as far as the "Oak Road issue" he is not willing to discuss this until the litigation is finalized.

Alderman Bacidore stated that the recommendation of the Streets, Alleys and Traffic committee to the City Council will be to designate the alley running north south between Lindberg and 11th Street as one way south, placing speed bumps in the portion south of Oak Road in the north south alley and installing a stop sign at the intersection of Oak Road between the alley and Marquette Street and tabling the second request until litigation is resolved. Alderman Bacidore polled the committee members. All were in favor of the recommendation.

There were no additional comments from the public.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carrie Brown". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Carrie Brown, City Clerk